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1838

MIRIAM

Class PS1779
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1838

To my Mother.

Princeton Feb. 13. 1845.

A D Peck

By Mrs E B Hall
of
Providence, R. I.

MIRIAM;

A DRAMATIC POEM.

BY THE

AUTHOR OF "JOANNA OF NAPLES."

Second Edition, Revised.

Mrs. Louisa Jane (Park) Hall

BOSTON:
H. P. NICHOLS AND COMPANY,
147, Washington Street,
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TO

THE REVEREND

ALEXANDER YOUNG,

FORMERLY HER PASTOR, AND ALWAYS HER FRIEND,

THE FOLLOWING PAGES

ARE RESPECTFULLY AND GRATEFULLY

INSCRIBED

BY THE AUTHOR.

PREFACE.

THE following Sketch was begun in the summer of 1825, and finished in the summer ensuing. It was commenced in the indulgence of an early propensity for beguiling leisure hours by the pen, and was completed for the entertainment of a small circle of friends. The author has been repeatedly urged to publish it; but as it never formed any part of her plan to attempt a regular tragedy, and as she was fully aware of its deficiencies even as a dramatic poem, she has allowed it to slumber in the safe obscurity of manuscript for a longer period than is prescribed by Horatian authority, though without obeying the other portion of the Roman critic's injunction. It is with great self-distrust that she is at last persuaded to submit it to the fearful ordeal of publication; feeling that if neglect or severe criticism should decide the time spent in its composition to have been ill employed, she must henceforward con-

scientiously resign pursuits that have till now lent a charm to many a solitary hour. The lapse of years has already cooled her imagination, and taught her that exertions whose tendency might be more practical and useful, would now interest her feelings more deeply. She gives this early effort to the press by the advice of those whose judgment, — if unbiassed by friendship, — she must highly respect. If warned by the result to abstain in future from similar attempts, she will submit with deference to the injunction.

It may not be unnecessary to state, that although the characters in the following scenes are imaginary, the author aimed at an illustration of the state of things which actually existed when Christianity was struggling, almost for life, under the persecution of triumphant Heathenism.

May 1*st*, 1837.

PREFACE

TO THE SECOND EDITION.

The author of Miriam deeply regrets having given her early production to the press, in 1837, without such revision as her respect for the Public demanded. Many errors of carelessness, especially in rhythm, bore testimony to its having been written without a thought of publication; and when at last she yielded to solicitation, and in a temporary access of courage gave up her manuscript to a friend, the state of her eyesight forbade a deliberate examination of its pages. It would have been advisable to have waited a few months;—in that case, probably the work would never have emerged from privacy. Her dread of publication would have returned upon her with fresh strength, as she again contemplated some graver faults, which are so interwoven with the very texture of the poem, as

to be incurable. The voice of Criticism has pronounced upon them no censures so severe as those her own judgment long since whispered. Whilst acknowledging the justice of these strictures — in all instances kindly expressed — she has been induced, by the unlooked for commendations that have greeted her little work, to put forth a second edition; — but this she has not done, without first attempting, in the following pages, to repair whatever errors were susceptible of correction.

September 20*th*, 1838.

MIRIAM.

CHARACTERS.

THRASENO, *an aged Syrian — a Christian.*

MIRIAM, *his daughter.*

EUPHAS, *his son.*

PISO, *a noble Roman, a persecutor of the Christians.*

PAULUS, *his son.*

CHRISTIANS.

SCENE — *Rome.*

TIME — *One night, from sunset to sunrise.*

MIRIAM;

A DRAMATIC POEM.

SCENE I.

The Garden of Thraseno, at Rome. Thraseno, Euphas.

EUPHAS.

My father, markest thou? along the west
The golden footsteps of departed day
Are fading fast; in yonder dusky sky,
Yon far and boundless vault, one lonely star
Is faintly twinkling forth. The perfum'd air
Of evening, sighing 'mid the drooping leaves
And closing flowers, breathes fresh. It is the hour.
At early nightfall were we bidden forth.

THRASENO.

Aye! in the dim and silent hour of dusk,
As if to do some deed that conscious day
Might blush to look upon, must we steal forth
To bear the sacred dust of him we lov'd
To its ignoble rest. In some drear cave,
Some dark and subterraneous abode,
Hid from the common light and air of heav'n,
Haunt of the barking wolf or coiling snake,
Our temples and our sepulchres must rise;
And there, beneath the torches' ghastly glare,
Few, sad, and fearful must the pious meet
To raise in tones subdued the solemn hymn,
Breathe with white, quivering lips the voice of prayer,
And bend the trembling knee unto the One,
The pure and living God! and wildly start
When sighs the breeze along the cavern's roof,
And sways the torch-light's red and fitful blaze.
Is this to worship thee, O God! with thoughts
That mount imperfect and are half weigh'd down
By dread of earthly dangers? with stern eyes
Glancing around, lest unawares the foe
Burst on our simple rites, and quench in blood
The flame just kindling on thine altars fit,
Meek, holy hearts!

Enter Miriam.

EUPHAS.

Sister! thy cheek is pale,
Though all day long a deep and hectic tinge
Hath sate in brightness on one crimson'd spot,
Lending unearthly radiance to thine eyes,
But telling sadly of the waste within.
Fair as thou wast, sweet sister, ne'er till late
The rose hath glow'd upon thy pure, pale cheek;
And I have watch'd the strange and boding flush
Mounting and kindling wildly there at times,
And fading then unto a deathly white,
Until I feel too well that not as yet
Is it the bloom of health or happiness.
And thy dark eyes that flash unwonted fires!
The glow — the flash — my sister, speak too plain
A fever'd blood, or bosom ill at ease!

MIRIAM.

Has thy young eye, my brother, learnt so well
To read the soul's deep workings in the face?
And have thy sixteen summers taught thee thus
To trace the secrets of a heart as pure,
Though not perchance as open and as blest
As thine?

THRASENO.

My child! how *can* there be a grief
In that young heart of thine, a secret woe,
Thy father and thy brother may not share?
Around thee I have mark'd the shadow fall,
And hourly gaz'd upon thy wasting form,
Until my heart grew sick — yet did not dream
That other clouds than those which overhang
Thine injur'd sect, were brooding on thy soul,
Once the pure mirror of a father's smiles.
Can it be so? It is as if a cloud
From the deep bosom of a peaceful lake
Should rise and sullen hang upon its face,
Hiding it from the bright and smiling skies.
Oh say, my child, there is no secret grief,
No canker sorrow eating at the core
Of my sweet bud.

MIRIAM.

My father! I am ill.
A weight is on my spirits, and I feel
The fountain of existence drying up,
Shrinking I know not where, like waters lost
Amid the desert sands. Nay! grow not pale!
I *have* felt thus, and thought each secret spring

Of life was failing fast within me. *Then*
In saddest willingness I could have died.
There have been hours I would have quitted you,
And all that life hath dear and beautiful,
Without one wish to linger in its smiles:
My summons would have call'd a weary soul
Out of a heavy bondage. But this day
A better hope hath dawn'd upon my mind.
A high and pure resolve is nourish'd there,
And even now it sheds upon my breast
That holy peace it hath not known so long.
This night — aye! in a few brief hours, perchance,
It will know calm once more — (or break at once!)
[*Aside.*

THRASENO.

And is this all, my child! *all* thou wilt trust
To loving hearts, wherein thou art enshrin'd
The best, most precious of all earthly things,
And second held to nothing — save our faith?
And must we look on thee as on a book
Close seal'd, yet full of hidden mysteries
That may affect our dearest happiness?
Miriam! it is not well. Dark mystery
Doth hang round nothing pure — save God alone!

MIRIAM.

Oh no! it is not well. A voice within
Full oft hath whisper'd me, "it is not well."
And yet, ——

THRASENO.

"And yet"!—I dare not question thee.
A nameless fear is pressing on my soul.

EUPHAS.

Speak, Miriam! seest thou not the gathering shade
Upon our father's brow?—oh speak! although
Each word in scorching flame should grave itself
Upon the hearts that love thee with full trust.

MIRIAM.

Euphas! what deemest thou I have to tell?
A wild and terrible suspicion sits
Within thy troubled eye. And can it be
That hearts so young and pure can dream of things
So horrible? My father! yon bright stars
Are o'er us with their quiet light; the dews
Are falling softly from the cloudless sky;
The cool and fragrant breath of evening waves
Our rustling vine leaves,—yet not one of these

Is purer than the bosom of thy child. O father!
Brother! — ye do believe me?

EUPHAS.

Do I not?
I could not live, and doubt thy truth.

THRASENO.

I know,
I know, my child, that thou art innocent,
As native purity and steady faith
Can make the heart of frail and erring man.
But why should darkness hang around the steps
Of one that loves the light? Why wilt thou not
Let in the beams of day upon thy soul
To mingle with the kindred brightness there?

MIRIAM.

Urge me not now. I cannot — cannot *yet*.
Have I not told you that a starlike gleam
Was rising on my darken'd mind? When Hope
Shall sit upon the tossing waves of thought,
As broods the halcyon on the troubled deep,
Then, if my spirit be not blighted, wreck'd,
Crush'd — by the storm, I will unfold my griefs.
But until then — and long it will not be! —

Yet in that brief, brief time my soul must bear
A fiercer, deadlier struggle still! — Ye dear ones!
Look not upon me thus, but in your thoughts,
When ye go forth unto your evening prayers,
Oh! bear me up to Heav'n with all my grief.
Pray that my holy courage may not fail.
Mark ye my words?

THRASENO.

Miriam, come with us!
I have beheld thee sick, and sorrowful,
But never thus.

MIRIAM.

Father! I cannot go.

EUPHAS.

Know'st thou last night the long-tried Stephen went
Unto his peaceful rest? and we this eve
Are bidden to the humble burial,
Shrouded in night, of him whose virtues claim'd
At least such tribute from a christian heart.
Sweet sister! come thou forth with us. I know
Thou wouldst not slight the poor remains of him
Whose spotless life thou didst revere and love.

MIRIAM.

A ripe and goodly sheaf hath gently fall'n.
Let peace be in the good man's obsequies;
I will not carry there a troubled soul.

THRASENO.

Where wouldst thou seek for peace or quietness
If not beside the altar of thy God?

MIRIAM.

Within these mighty walls of sceptred Rome
A thousand temples rise unto her gods,
Bearing their lofty domes unto the skies,
Grac'd with the proudest pomp of earth; their shrines
Glittering with gems, their stately colonnades,
Their dreams of genius wrought into bright forms,
Instinct with grace and godlike majesty,
Their ever-smoking altars, white-robed priests,
And all the pride of gorgeous sacrifice.
And yet these things are nought. Rome's prayers ascend
To greet th' unconscious skies, in the blue void
Lost like the floating breath of frankincense,
And find no hearing or acceptance there.
And yet there *is* an Eye that ever marks

Where its own people pay their simple vows,
Though to the rocks, the caves, the wilderness,
Scourg'd by a stern and ever-watchful foe!
There *is* an Ear that hears the voice of prayer
Rising from lonely spots where Christians meet,
Although it stir not more the sleeping air
Than the soft waterfall, or forest breeze.
Think'st thou, my father, this benignant God
Will close his ear, and turn in wrath away
From the poor sinful creature of his hand,
Who breathes in solitude her humble prayer?
Think'st thou he will not hear me, should I kneel
Here in the dust beneath his starry sky,
And strive to raise my voiceless thoughts to Him,
Making an altar of my broken heart?

THRASENO.

He will! it were a sin to doubt it, love.
But yet—must then the funeral hymn arise,
And thy melodious voice be wanting there?
Wilt thou alone of all our little band—
Believe me, child, caprice and idle whim
Are born of selfishness, and aptly nurs'd
In youthful minds, where sin of deeper dye
Would shrink from entering at open gates,
Aw'd by the light of purity within.

MIRIAM.

That voice is chiding me! *that* eye is stern!

EUPHAS.

He keenly feels each pang that he inflicts.

MIRIAM.

Dear father! hear me then, since I must speak!
This evening hath its task, a task of tears,
And strange and spirit-crushing agony;
And here, ev'n here, before yon stars have set,
It must be wrought! Wilt thou not leave me then?
Eyes such as thine, my father, must not see
The strugglings of my soul with evil things.
But they *shall* see me, and in triumph too,
When by the strength that God this night hath giv'n,
I greet thee next in innocence and peace,
And proudly tell thee how the battle went.
Thou mayst not, canst not, aid me; but alone—
(Nay, not *alone*, O God!)—my spirit *must*
Be disciplin'd, and wrung, and exercis'd,
Until I am, my father, what I was,—
A child that had no secrets for thy ear.
Wilt thou not go without me, this *one* night?
I tell thee on this boon my peace depends:

Peace! nay, far more! more than all earthly peace!
Wild as I seem, my sire, trust me this once,
And when the dawn next gilds yon lofty shrine,
Girt with its triple row of statues fair,
It shall not greet one marble brow or cheek
More tranquil or more pure than will be mine!

THRASENO.

Then on this promise, love, will I go forth.
Thy bud of life hath blown beneath mine eye;
I cannot look on thee, and dream that guile
Or guilt is on that lip, or in that heart.
But with a saddened soul, and with a tear
I cannot check, my child, I thus impress
My parting kiss upon thy brow. Farewell!
God reads thy mystery — though I may not.
May *He* be with thee in thy solitude! [*Exit.*

MIRIAM.

Best, best of fathers! — fare thee well! thy thoughts,
Thy prayers I know are with me still, and may
Bestead me in the trial which draws nigh.
My brother! must I turn to *thee* with tears
To claim the one poor boon of solitude?
Look! the bright west is fading; in the east
The rising moon uprears her blood-red disk,

As if a distant city were in flames
Upon yon dun horizon's utmost verge.
Why ling'rest thou? why lookest thou on me
With such a fix'd, sad, monitory gaze?

EUPHAS.

Sister! I too go forth, but with a weight
Pressing upon my heart. Would I knew more—
Or less! These strange and sad presentiments
Are not the coinage of a sickly mind,
An idle fancy, prone to dream of ill.
Things that these eyes have seen, have left behind
Their deep, enduring shadows on my soul.
I could not quit thee now, were there not yet
Within my heart an ever-springing hope,
A confidence that hath grown slowly up,
Ev'n from my birth around my heart-strings twined,
Which whispers still of peace and purity,
And lets me think of nought but holiness
Whene'er I gaze on thee. Slowly, alas!
Doubt and suspicion rise in brothers' hearts.
Thou weepest, Miriam! wilt thou then relent,
And let me bide with thee this dreadful eve?
If its dire task be good ——

MIRIAM.

Euphas! away!
And quickly too!—(Great God! my Paulus comes—
And should they meet!)—Oh! I conjure thee, boy!
Aye, in the dust, and on my knees implore
That thou wilt leave me instantly!—Go *now*,
If there is aught in thy poor sister's voice,—
Her supplication—that may win one boon!

EUPHAS.

Sister, I go!—I would have warn'd thee more,
Thou wilful one!—but God be with thee now!—
Temptations that are sought—nay, look not thus!
But oh! be not too bold in innocence!
A young confiding heart at once lock'd up—
A self-reliance that rejects such aid
As from a loving brother's hand—Nay, then!
I cannot answer tears!—Shouldst thou repent—
Farewell! [*Exit.*

MIRIAM.

Repent! not till my bleeding heart
Forget the faith for which it yields its all!—
Great God! the hour is come, and how unfit

Is in her native weakness thy poor worm
To meet its agony! I feel the peace,
The holy resolution I had nurs'd,
Dying away within me, and my prayers
I fear—I fear—have not been heard!—Now, Father!
God of yon sparkling heav'n! leave me not now
Unto the sole support of human strength!—
Was it my fancy?—was it but the breeze,
That sudden shower'd the rose leaves in its sport?
Oh no!—he comes—and life seems failing me!

Enter Paulus.

PAULUS.

Chide me not, love, although the moon hath risen,
And melts her way along those fleecy clouds,
Climbing midway unto her zenith point.—
My father gives this night a stately feast,
Grac'd with the presence of Rome's proudest lords;
And there, within the long and lofty hall,
O'ercanopied with silver tissue, lit
By myriads of golden lamps, that fed
With scented oils, pour light and fragrance round,
Listless I lay, engarlanded with flowers,—
And roving, in my rapt and secret thoughts,
Hither, where thou in perfect loveliness
Sat'st like a Dryad, 'neath the open sky,

Waiting thy truent lover: till at last,
Weary and sick of all that met my gaze,
Heedless of guests or frowning sire, I rose,
And swifter than the young and untam'd steed
Flies with the wind across his own free plains,
I sped to her — from whom alone I learn'd
All that my spirit ever knew of love.
And what that love is — Miriam, thou canst tell,
Since for thy sake I lay my laurels down
To wreath the myrtle round these unworn brows,
Careless of warlike fame and earth's renown. —
But how! thy cheeks — thy very lips — are pale!
By moonlight paler than yon marble nymph
Reclining graceful o'er her streaming urn.
Turn hither, love, and let thy Paulus read
If grief or anger sit upon thy brow.
Thy silence, thine averted glances, strike
With dread unspeakable my inmost soul.
No word of welcome — gods! what meaneth this?
Never, except in dreams, have I beheld
Such deep and dreadful meaning in thine eye,
Such agony upon thy quivering lip!
Speak, Miriam! breathe one blessed word of life;
For in the middle watch of yester-night
Even thus I saw a dim and shadowy ghost
Standing beneath the moon's uncertain light,

So mute — so motionless — so changed — and yet
So like to thee!

MIRIAM.

My Paulus!

PAULUS.

'T is thy voice!
Prais'd be the gods! it never seem'd so sweet.
Say on! my spirit hangs upon thy words.
What blight hath stricken thee since last we met?

MIRIAM.

A blight that is contagious, and will fall
Perchance upon thy fairest, dearest hopes,
With no less deadly violence than now
It hath on mine. Paulus! is there no word
These lips can utter, that may make thee wish
Eternal silence there had stamp'd her seal?

PAULUS.

I know not, love! thou startlest me! — No! — none!
Unless it be of hatred — change — or death!
And these — it can be none of these!

MIRIAM.

Why not?

PAULUS.

Ye gods, my Miriam! look not on me thus!
My blood runs cold. "Why not," saidst thou? Because
Thou art too young — too good — too beautiful
To die; and as for change or hatred, love,
Not till I see yon clear and starry skies
Raining down fire and pestilence on man,
Turning the beauteous earth whereon we stand
Into an arid, scath'd and blackening waste, —
Miriam — will I believe that thou canst change.

MIRIAM.

Oh, thou art right! the anguish of my soul,
My spirit's deep and rending agony,
Tell me that though this heart may surely break,
There is no *change* within it! and through life,
Fondly and wildly — though most hopelessly —
With all its strong affections will it cleave
To him for whom it nearly yielded all
That makes life precious — peace and self-esteem,
Friends upon earth, and hopes in heav'n above!

PAULUS.

Mean'st thou—I know not what. My mind grows dark
Amid a thousand 'wildering mazes lost.
There is a wild and dreadful mystery
Ev'n in thy words of love I cannot solve.

MIRIAM.

Hear me — for with the holy faith that erst
Made strong the shudd'ring patriarch's heart and hand,
When meek below the glitt'ring knife lay stretch'd
The boy whose smiles were sunshine to his age,
This night I offer up a sacrifice
Of life's best hopes to the One Living God!
Yes, from this night, my Paulus, never more
Mine eyes shall look upon thy form, mine ears
Drink in the tones of thy beloved voice.

PAULUS.

Ye gods! ye cruel gods! let me awake
And find this but a dream!

MIRIAM

Is it then said?
O God! the words so fraught with bitterness
So soon are utter'd — and thy servant lives! —

Aye, Paulus; ever from that hour, when first
My spirit knew that thine was wholly lost,
And to its superstitions wedded fast,
Shrouded in darkness, blind to every beam
Streaming from Zion's hill athwart the night
That broods in horror o'er a heathen world,
Ev'n from that hour my shudd'ring soul beheld
A dark and fathomless abyss yawn wide
Between us two! and o'er it gleam'd alone
One pale, dim-twinkling star! the ling'ring hope
That Grace descending from the Throne of Light
Might fall in gentle dews upon that heart,
And melt it into humble piety.
Alas! that hope hath faded! and I see
The fatal gulf of separation still
Between us, love, and stretching on for aye
Beyond the grave in which I feel that soon
This clay with all its sorrows shall lie down.
Union for us is none, in yonder sky:
Then how on earth?—so in my inmost soul,
Nurtur'd with midnight tears, with blighted hopes,
With silent watchings and incessant prayers,
A holy resolution hath ta'en root,
And in its might at last springs proudly up.
We *part*, my Paulus! not in hate, but love,
Yielding unto a stern necessity.

And I along my sad, short pilgrimage,
Will bear the memory of our sinless love,
As mothers wear the image of the babe
That died upon their bosom ere the world
Had stamp'd its spotless soul with good or ill,
Pictur'd in infant loveliness and smiles,
Close to the heart's fond core, to be drawn forth
Ever in solitude, and bath'd in tears.—
But how! with such unmanly grief struck down,
Wither'd, thou Roman knight!

PAULUS.

My brain is pierc'd!
Mine eyes with blindness smitten! and mine ear
Rings faintly with the echo of thy words!
Henceforth what man shall ever build his faith
On woman's love—on woman's constancy?—
Maiden! look up! I would but gaze once more
Upon that open brow and clear, dark eye,
To read what aspect Perjury may wear,
What garb of loveliness may Falsehood use,
To lure the eye of guileless, manly love!—
Cruel, cold-blooded, fickle that thou art,
Dost thou not quail beneath thy lover's eye?
How! there is light within thy lofty glance,

A flush upon thy cheek, a settled calm
Upon thy lip and brow!

MIRIAM.

Aye, even so.
A light — a flush — a calm — not of this earth!
For in this hour of bitterness and woe,
The Grace of God is falling on my soul,
Like dews upon the with'ring grass which late
Red scorching flames have sear'd. Again
The consciousness of faith, of sins forgiven,
Of wrath appeas'd, of heavy guilt thrown off,
Sheds on my breast its long-forgotten peace,
And shining steadfast as the noonday sun,
Lights me along the path that duty marks.
Lover too dearly lov'd! a long farewell!
The banner'd field — the glancing spear — the shout
That bears the victor's name unto the skies, —
The laurell'd brow — be thine ——

PAULUS.

Maid! — now hear *me!*
For by thine own false vows and broken faith,
By thy deceitful lips, and dark, cold heart ——

MIRIAM.

Great God, support me now! — It cannot be
That from my Paulus' lips such bitter words ——

PAULUS.

Such bitter words! nay, maiden, what were thine?

MIRIAM.

Mine were not spoken, love, in heat or wrath,
But in th' uprightness of a heart that knew
Its duty both to God and man, and sought
Peace with its Maker — ere it broke. But thou ——

PAULUS.

And I? — thou false one! am not I a man?
A Roman too? and is a Roman's heart
A plaything made for girls to toy withal,
And then to keep or idly fling away,
As the light fancy of the moment prompts?
Have I then stoop'd to win thy fickle love
From my proud pinnacle of rank and fame,
Wasting my youth's best season on a dream,
Forgetful of my name, my sire, my gods,
To be thus trifled with and scorn'd at last?

MIRIAM.

Canst thou not learn to hate me?

PAULUS.

O ye gods!
With what a look of calm despair ——

MIRIAM.

Aye, Paulus!
Never, in all my deep despondency,
In all the hours of dark presentiment
In which my fancy often conjur'd up
This scene of trial — did my spirit dream
Of bitterness like that which now thy hand
Is pouring in my cup of life. Alas!
Must we then part in anger? shall this hour,
With harsh upbraidings marr'd ——

PAULUS.

Syren! in vain —
Would I *could* learn to hate thee! trampling down
The mem'ry of my fond and foolish love,
As I would crush an adder 'neath my heel!
But no! the poison rankles in my veins; —
It may not be; — each look and tone of thine

Tells me that yet thou art my bosom's queen,
And each vain, frantic struggle only draws
Closer around my heart the woven toils.

[*A pause.*

Miriam! my pride is bow'd — my wrath subdued —
My heart attun'd e'en to thy slightest will, —
So that thou yet wilt let me linger on,
Hoping and dreaming that thou hat'st me not,
Suffer'd to come at times, and sadly gaze
Upon thy loveliness, as if thou wert
A Dian shrin'd within her awful fane,
Made to be look'd upon and idoliz'd,
But in whose presence passion's lightest pulse,
Love's gentlest whisper, were a deadly sin.
Cast me not from thee, love! send me not forth
Blasted and wan into a heartless world,
Amid its cold and glittering pageantry,
To learn what utter loneliness of soul,
What wordless, deep, and sick'ning misery,
Is in the sense of unrequited love!

MIRIAM.

I cannot — must not hear thee. Even now
A chord is touched within my soul. — Great God!
Where is the strength thou didst vouchsafe of late?
Anger — reproach — were better borne than this!

PAULUS.

Why should thy gentler nature thus be crush'd?
Is not the voice within thee far more just
Than the harsh dictates of thy gloomy faith?
Thy stern and unrelenting Deity ——

MIRIAM.

Youth! thou remindest me — thou dost blaspheme
The God of Mercy whom I serve; and now
Courage and strength return at once to nerve
My trembling limbs, my weak and yielding soul.
What wouldst thou have? that I should yet drag on
A life of dark and vile hypocrisy,
Days full of fear and nights of vain remorse,
And love, though sinless, yet not innocent?
For well I know that when thy sunny smiles
Are on me, sternly frowning doth look down
My Maker on our stolen interview!
It is a crime of dye too deep and dark
To be wash'd out but with a life of tears,
And penitence, and utter abstinence.
I never will behold thy face again!
My soul shall be unlock'd and purified,
And there the eyes of those that love me well
Shall find no dark and sinful mystery,

Shunning a tender father's scrutiny,
And weighing down my spirit to the dust. ——
Paulus! — again — farewell! yet — yet in peace
We part!

PAULUS.

Maiden! by all my perish'd hopes,
By the o'erwhelming passion of my soul,
By the remembrance of that fatal hour
When first I spake to thee of love — and thought
That thou —— Aye! by the sacred gods, I swear,
I will not yield thee thus! In open day,
Before my father's eyes — and bearing too
Perchance his malediction on my head —
Before the face of all assembled Rome,
Bann'd though I be by all her priests and gods, —
Thee — thee will I lead forth — my Christian bride!

MIRIAM.

Aye! sayst thou so, my Paulus? thou art bold,
And generous. Meet bridal will it be —
The stake — the slow red fire — perchance the den
Of hungry lions, gnashing with white teeth
In savage glee at sight of thy young bride,
Their destin'd prey! for well thou know'st that these
Are but the tend'rest mercies of thy sire

To the scorn'd sect, whose lofty faith my soul
Holds fast through torments worse than aught that these
Can offer to the clay wherein it dwells.

PAULUS.

Drive me not mad! — Nay— nay— I have not done;
The dark cold waters of despair rise fast,
But have not yet o'ertopped each resting-place.
We will go forth upon the bounding sea,
We two alone, and chase the god of day
O'er the broad ocean, where each eve he dips
His blazing chariot in the western wave,
And seek some lonely isle of peace and love,
Where ling'ring summer dwells the livelong year,
Wasting the music of her happy birds,
The unpluck'd richness of her golden fruits,
The fragrance of her blossoms o'er the land.
And we will be the first to tread the turf,
And raise our quiet hearth and altars there,
And thou shalt fearless bow before the Cross,
Praying unto what unknown God thou wilt,
While I ——

MIRIAM.

No more, my Paulus! it is vain.
Why should we thus unnerve our souls with dreams,

With fancies wilder, idler far than dreams?
Our destiny is fix'd! the hour is come!
And wilt thou that a frail and trembling girl
Should meet its anguish with a steadier soul
Than thine, proud soldier!—Ha! what hurried step——

Enter Euphas.

EUPHAS.

Sister! I have escap'd — I scarce know how; —
Their shrieks yet ring within my thrilling ears.
The foe hath burst upon th' unfinished rites,
Slaughtering some, and bearing off in bonds ——
Just Heav'n! — what man is this?

MIRIAM.

Oh, answer me!
And say our father is unhurt!

EUPHAS.

Hear, Miriam!
I *will* be answer'd first! what knight is this?
What doth he here? [*A pause.*
Oh grief! can this be so?
Would I had died among their glitt'ring swords,
Pouring my life-blood from a thousand wounds,
Ere my young eyes had seen this cruel shame!

Hast thou no subterfuge at hand, pale girl?
Well may convulsion wring thy trembling lip!
Were I a Roman boy — of Roman faith —
This hand ere now — But no! — I could not do't!
Thou art too like the saint that bore us both!
Let me be gone.

MIRIAM.

Stay, stay, rash boy! Alas —
The thickening horrors of this awful night
Have flung, methinks, a spell upon my soul.
I tell thee, Euphas, thou hast far more cause,
Proudly to clasp my breaking heart to thine,
And bless me with a loving brother's praise,
Than thus to stand with sad but angry eye,
Hurling thy hasty scorn upon a brow,
As sinless as thine own — breaking the reed
But newly bruised — pouring coals of fire
Upon my fresh and bleeding wounds! — Oh, tell me,
What hath befall'n my father? Say he lives,
Or let me lay my head upon thy breast,
And die at once!

EUPHAS.

He lives — the old man lives.
See that *thou* kill him not. Let me pass on.

MIRIAM.

Tell me in mercy first, — where is our sire?
Why art thou here alone?

EUPHAS.

Hast thou no fear
To take that honor'd name upon thy lips!
I meant with gentlest caution to have told
Tidings so fraught with woe; — 't were useless now.
Maiden! he is a pris'ner!

MIRIAM.

Oh! just Heav'n!

EUPHAS.

They master'd him — the ruthless slaves — while I,
Lurking securely 'mid the copsewood near,
With shudd'ring frame and half-averted eye
Beheld them rudely bind his wither'd hands,
And mock his struggles impotent, and rend
The decent silver locks upon his brow,
While overhead the fair and quiet moon
Sail'd on, and lent her light to deeds so foul!
And then I saw him meekly led away
Amid a throng of shrieking captives, men,

Women, and babes, unto the dungeon drear,
Whence he will never issue but to die
A death of shame and cruel agony!
And yet I stirr'd not — for I deem'd there grew
A spotless lily in the wilderness,
Whose unprotected sweetness none but I
Might shelter from the blast! I fondly dream'd
Thou wert too pure, too good, too beautiful,
To be thus flung upon the cold wide world,
Bearing the faith that men do trample on,
Alone and helpless — orphan'd — brotherless!
And so my kind and aged parent went
Unaided, unconsol'd. Shame on these tears!
Could I have dream'd the dove would shelter her
Beneath the vulture's foul and treacherous wing?
Alas, my father! sweeter far this night
Will be thy rest within thy noisome cell,
And more light-hearted wilt thou rise at dawn
To front the bloody Piso ——

MIRIAM.

Ha! dost hear?

PAULUS.

I hear — and I rejoice.

EUPHAS.

How? ruffian! Here?
Art thou still here? I had forgotten thee!
But by the strength the God of justice gives,
In this death-grapple thou shalt surely die!

PAULUS.

Art thou so hot? Unloose my throat, vain boy!
Beardless, unarm'd, and nerveless as thou art,
To risk thyself in desperate struggle thus,
With one whose slightest effort masters thee
As lightly as the bird of Jove bears off
The panting dove! ——
Thou seest I harm him not.
Thou know'st I would not hurt one glossy curl
Upon thy brother's head. —— [*To Euphas.*
Go! thou art safe.
I could not slay my bitterest enemy,
Were he as young and beautiful as thou,
And much less *thee* — in such a cause as this.
Take thou thy life.

EUPHAS.

I thank thee not. — Alas!
Thou couldst not proffer a more worthless gift.

Why should I live? I look upon yon girl
Weeping her bitter grief and self-reproach
In utter hopelessness — and pray thee take
The life which thou hast made so valueless.

PAULUS.

Be still. Why pratest thou of misery
To one on whose devoted head the gods
Have pour'd the cup of vengeance, long deferr'd,
With such a fierce and unrelenting wrath,
That glory — riches — fame — and e'en the name
I proudly bore — the hopes that rose this morn
As if the fire that lit them were from heav'n —
And life itself — are now no more to me
Than last night's dream. ——
One duty yet remains —
And when *that*'s done! — Look on these features, boy.
Hast thou not seen me on high festal days,
Deck'd with the tossing plume and snow-white robe,
And bearing high my proud and knightly brow
Amid the throng of Rome's degenerate lords?
Or did the abject Syrian boy ne'er dare
To lift his looks so high?

EUPHAS.

I scan thy face,

Proud youth! the lightnings leaping from thine eye
Avouch thee of a high and haughty race.
But of the name thou bear'st I only know
Thy deeds have steep'd it in such infamy,
That the pale statues of thy vaunted sires,
Lining thy hall, will surely one day leap
Forth from their niches in their living scorn,
And crush thee into senseless, shapeless dust.
I seek to know no more.

PAULUS.

Stripling! beware!
The powerful magic hidden in that name
Alone can bid thy father's prison open.
I am the son of Piso.

EUPHAS.

Is it so?
Thou — the proud Paulus — lurking here by night,
Prowling with stealthy foot around the cot,
Where in her innocence there dwelt a maid
Born and baptized in the Christian faith!
Thou Piso's son? Then by the God we serve,
Thou 'rt taken in the toils. Lo! this way come
Glittering in arms my father's trusty friends,
Whom I had summon'd hither but to aid

The orphans with their counsel — ere I dream'd ——
Alas! ——

MIRIAM.

I hear the tread of heavy feet!
And 'mid the trees I see their dusky forms!
Fly, Paulus, fly!

PAULUS.

Am I so base, think'st thou?

MIRIAM.

They come! with wrath upon their lurid brows.
In mercy, fly! — O God! it is too late!

PAULUS.

Is it thy madness or thy love that speaks?
What is to thee this foolish life of mine?
Thou in thine hour of triumph and cold scorn
Hast crush'd the heart wherein it beats — ev'n yet —
Too fondly beats for thee! Wouldst thou that death
Should not be wholly pangless? — Spare thy words;
Thou lov'st me not, — the mockery is ill-timed.

EUPHAS.

Hither, my friends, with speedier steps.

Enter armed Christians.

Ye come,
Girt with no needless weapons, to the cot
Of him who call'd you to a gentler task.
Lo! in the dove's own nest the serpent coil'd!
So that ye ask not *why* he hither came,
Do what ye list. It is the haughty son
Of him whose myrmidons this night have snatch'd
Your own best treasures shrieking from your arms,
Turning your hymns and holy prayers to groans,
Drenching th' unburied dust of him ye lov'd
With martyr's blood, and waking in your hearts
The stern, deep cry for vengeance!

MIRIAM.

O my brother!
How have such words a place on Christian lips?
Hear me, ye upright men! Bare not your swords.
The youth on whom ye bend such dreadful eyes
Is innocent of all — except the love,
The world-forgetting love he cherish'd ——

EUPHAS.

Miriam!
Dumb be the shameless tongue that would proclaim

What in a brother's patient love I sought
To hide from mortal eye!

MIRIAM.

It is too much!
My innocence —— Why do I grow so weak?
Wrongly and harshly dost thou judge of me!
Oh! for one breeze of purer, fresher air,
To sweep away the gath'ring mist that dims
My failing sight!

EUPHAS.

She faints! Let me not look
Upon her lifeless form, lest it awake
Pity that were a sin!

PAULUS.

How beautiful
Ev'n in her deathlike paleness doth she lie!
Fairest! from that kind swoon awake not yet.
Thy words were love? —one struggle then for life.
Meantime, in blest unconsciousness, perchance
Thou'lt 'scape a bloody sight. — Ye men of peace!
I wait my doom. Ye! who do boast your faith
A faith of love and peace and charity,

Look on the son of Piso, and declare
If, in his helplessness, your unarm'd foe
Shall live or die. — Ye pause? — I am prepar'd.
Though my young heart, that still beats steadily,
Be of a softer temper than my sire's, —
Though the same voice that boldly bids you strike,
Ofttimes for hours has sued most earnestly
To my stern father for a Christian's life, —
Hath bid the fire be quench'd, the tiger chain'd,
The scarce-believing captive given back
Ev'n from the grasp of death, to the wild pray'rs,
The blessings, and the tears of those he lov'd, —
Yet do I *claim* no mercy at your hands.
Do with me as you list — rememb'ring this —
The blood within these veins is innocent
As that which stain'd the floor of yonder cave! ——
How! — with a sudden frown ye wildly pluck
Your daggers forth? They gleam before an eye
That quivers not. — But thou — thou who art yet
A mild and gentle-hearted boy, arise!
Lift up thy buried face, and let me look
Once more upon its beauty — so like her's,
In all its pale and touching loveliness!
Thou stirrest not — I hear thy stifled sobs!
Bid'st thou the deed thou dar'st not look upon?

EUPHAS.

Let him not die!

FIRST CHRISTIAN.

He must.

EUPHAS.

Oh no! not thus
Religion asks the service of our hands.
The spirit of her mild and bloodless laws
Requires not life for life. Let him go forth.

PAULUS.

Boy! with that word thou hast undrawn the bolts
That close the deep, dark dungeon on thy sire,
And loos'd the heavy shackles on his arms.
For ev'ry idle drop of Piso's blood
Ye in your wrath and blind revenge had shed,
One pang the more had wrung those aged limbs.
But while I live, a blessed hope yet beams
Upon the dire captivity ye mourn.

EUPHAS.

Thou silver-tongued deceiver! Is it thus
Thou wouldst escape us! Think'st thou that because

My Christian heart relented at the thought
Of one lone, helpless victim's blood pour'd forth
As water in revengeful sacrifice,
I have become a weak, believing girl,
All fond credulity and hope? — Peace! — peace!
When thy deluding accents sound most sweet,
Most do I dread thy deep hypocrisy.
There is no hope!

PAULUS.

No hope! Ye gods! — my Miriam!
To thee and thine how humbly croucheth down
The lion thou hast tam'd!

EUPHAS.

Nay, let him go!
Hence in thy cruel treachery to thy sire!
Tell him that other Christians worship yet
The one pure God within the walls of Rome.
Bid him plant thick his stakes, to fury lash
His howling monsters from the wilderness;
And, ere the dawn, be sure thy myrmidons
Seize the forsaker of his helpless sire,
And let him end his brief and blighted days,
Withering for hours upon the welcome cross

In pangs — scarce worse than those remembrance brings.
Go, get thee hence! I spare thy wretched life;
But on thy brow I pour the utter scorn,
The deep abhorrence of my soul!

PAULUS.

Wake, maiden!
Why is thy fearful swoon so long! Alas!
Looking upon thy deathlike loveliness,
I hear strange, scornful words, and heed them not!

EUPHAS.

Mourneth the whirlwind o'er the broken flow'r?
Gaze not upon the ruin thou hast made.
Go to thy sire, and tell him ——

PAULUS.

Stripling! hear!
That sire hath now no son! I give myself
A pledge and hostage for your father's life;
And if the morrow's sun bring not your friends
Back from their dreary dungeon to your arms,
Let the bright daggers gleaming round me now
Drink the young blood of Piso's only son!
Go thou and tell my father this!

EUPHAS.

Roman!
I take thee at thy word! I go!—Perchance
Thou wouldst but lead me to the lion's den.
But if thy words *be* craft, and thy designs
Pregnant with direst mischief to my life,
It matters not; for I have that at stake
Would lead me on through fire and pestilence,
Famine, and thirst, and keenest agony,
Fearless and struggling still while hope remain'd!
My father! what hath earth to daunt mine eye,
Seeking to gaze once more upon that brow
I should have died to shield from violence?
No! I have nought below the skies but thee
And to the wild beast's lair I rush at once
To save thee, or to die!—My sister!—nay!
Let me not look on *her!*—Oh, who could dream
Falsehood had crept within a shrine so fair?
Let me turn from her, ere the memory
Of what she *was* ——
My father's friends! bear ye
The hostage of our kindred's lives away
Up to the lonely garden, by the wall
Where we have sometimes met, and there await
The answer I shall bring. If when the sun

Wakes with his first red beam the matin birds,
I come not yet, nor from the rising ground
Ye should mark aught approach that tokens good,
Deem that my father's cell hath clos'd on me,
That in my youth I am held fit to wear
The martyr's glorious crown — and that no pow'r,
No earthly pow'r, can save the friends ye love
Out of the spoiler's hand. Ye know the rest.

[*Exit.*

PAULUS.

The rest! — blood rudely shed — untimely death —
And an ignoble grave — are in that word.
Oh! for one touch of that high energy,
That eager spirit thrilling through each vein,
That in my days of young renown and pride
Bore me triumphant in the battle's van,
Where brightest flashed the swords and thickest flew
The barbed javelins round my glitt'ring shield! ——
Christians! ere we go hence, I would but look
Once more upon her face! I hear a voice
Sighing her dirge among yon rustling leaves,
And calling him whose spirit lived in her's
Away — away from worldly sin and woe.
And I would learn from that calm, marble brow
The deep and blest repose there is in death!

[*A cloud crosses the moon.*

How! doth the God she worshipped thus forbid
The sinner's eye to gaze on things so pure?
Pass — shadow — pass! — a holier light than thine,
Fair orb! falls on my dark and troubled soul,
While thus I drink in peace and quietness
Gazing upon my Miriam's silent face! ——
Ye gods! methought a sudden quivering ran
O'er her pale lips and eyelids softly clos'd!
She stirs! — she sighs! — she looks upon me now!
Life — life and light are waking in her eye!

MIRIAM.

Methought once more in dear Judea's land,
A child by Siloe's gushing fount I sat
Close by my angel-mother's knee, and heard
The holy hymns she sweetly sung each night
Unto our God, while ever and anon
The quiet murmur of the brook came in,
Filling each pause with softest melody,
Even as it was wont, years — years ago!
Was it an idle vision of the night? a trance?
Where am I now? whose dark bright eyes are these
Gazing upon me thus? Euphas! my sire!
Where are ye both? [*rising suddenly*] Alas! alas!
too well
I do remember all!

PAULUS

My Miriam! Dost not
Remember me?

MIRIAM.

Peace! — peace! that voice — it kills
Oh! for the deep and blest forgetfulness ——
Where is my brother?

PAULUS.

Am I then so hateful?
Wilt thou not hear my voice, although it speak
Of those ——

MIRIAM.

Tell me, ye men of anxious brow,
Where is the dark-hair'd boy? the boy I lov'd
Ev'n from his cradle better than my life!

FIRST CHRISTIAN.

He hath gone forth.

MIRIAM.

Gone forth — said ye? — and whither?
Alone — unarm'd?

PAULUS

Hear from my lips the tale!
Up to my father's palace hath he gone,
Alone — unarm'd ——

MIRIAM.

Enough — enough! — just God
Now doth thy wrath fall heavy on my soul!

PAULUS.

Wilt thou not hear what purpose led him forth?

MIRIAM.

I know it — and I pray you, let me pass!

PAULUS.

How! — whither wouldst thou go?

MIRIAM.

To die! — with him ——
With them! — are they not *both* to die?

PAULUS.

Nay — nay!
None whom thou lov'st shall die. I bade him say——

MIRIAM.

How! was he sent — *sent*, Paulus! — and by *thee?*
I will not stay! loose me! the air grows thick —
I cannot breathe! —— Alas! betray'd — betray'd
Even into the tyrant's hand! so young!
So good — so innocent — oh, my brother!

PAULUS.

Hear me this once! Weep, if thou wilt, but hear!

MIRIAM.

I have no pow'r to move. The God who gave
Hath ta'en away the sinner's wasted strength.
Say on; but let my brother be thy theme.

PAULUS.

Terror and blank dismay he bears with him
This night into my father's stately halls.
Think'st thou the unknown tyrant whom thou hat'st,
He whom thy sire's deep wrongs have bid thee curse,
Will feel no shuddering when he hears the tale
Told by thy brother's lips — perchance erè now?
Knowing that by some dark, mysterious chance,
Fierce Christian swords are closing round my breast,
Ready with morn's first beam to drink my blood —

Thinks't thou, to save this young and much-priz'd life,
He would not give a thousand Christians back
From their barr'd cells? — nay — from the lifted cross?
Thou know'st him not.

MIRIAM.

Paulus! dost *thou* believe
I shall again behold my father's face?
Or that the noble boy, whom thou hast sent
Up to the house of blood and cruel fraud,
Will ever from that den return unharm'd?

PAULUS.

I am my father's only son, and lov'd
As only sons alone are ever lov'd. In this
Lieth my hope.

MIRIAM.

Thy hope! oh God! — thy hope?
Is it no more? — thou shouldst have been *assur'd*,
Ere thou hadst risk'd a life I hold so dear.
Oh, why doth trusting woman plant her hopes
In the unknown quicksands of a stranger's faith?
She should love none she hath not known from birth —
Or look to be deceiv'd — as I have been.

Why dost thou stay me thus? Lo! I am call'd!
I must be there to close their eyes! — Away!

PAULUS.

Hear me, my Miriam!

MIRIAM.

Nay! 't is past! Away.
That voice was once a spell; — it is all o'er!
Why dost thou call me thine? I have no part
In thee, nor thou in me; — and we love not,
Hate not, and *worship* not alike. How then
Can I be thine? I pray thee, let me go!

PAULUS.

And whither then?

MIRIAM.

I know not! — Where are *they?*

PAULUS.

They will be here ere morn.

MIRIAM.

Thou think'st not so!
Youth! thou hast learn'd deceit.

PAULUS.

I bear all this!
I mark the frightful paleness of thy cheek,
The wild and wandering glances of thine eye,
And stifle down my utter agony.
Oh, what a night is this!

MIRIAM.

Am I so pale?
It is thy work — and, for a gentle youth,
Strange havoc hast thou caus'd — much misery!
Say'st thou my looks are wild? It is because
I linger here with thee, when I should fly
E'en to earth's farthest bounds.— I will be gone!
Aye! I am weak, but not in spirit, youth!
And the rous'd soul hath strength to lift its clay.
I must behold the boy's dark curls once more,
And stroke again my father's silver locks,
And hear their last, last words of pardoning love,
And learn of them, pure martyrs! how to die!
Think'st thou I shall have pow'r to look on them
Ev'n to the last, through all their agonies?
Or will he graciously let *me* die first?

PAULUS.

It is too much!

MIRIAM.

Nay, if I haste, he may!
Why dost thou hold me? I am growing strong.
And thou, methinks, art weak!
[*Bursting from him*] Lo! I am free!

PAULUS.

Will ye not stay her? I am powerless;
Her words have stricken from mine arms their force.

FIRST CHRISTIAN.

She hath her task; strength will be given her.

MIRIAM.

Aye, ye say true. I am not wholly left;
And like a morning mist from gleaming lakes,
The cloud is passing from my 'wilder'd mind.
Youth! wert *thou* as *they* are, ev'n thus
For thee would I risk all.—If there be hope
Or consolation in those words, take thou
One last, fond blessing with them!—*this*, at least,

Will sure be pardon'd me. There is a love
That innocence may feel for sinning friends,
A love made up of holy hopes, and prayers,
And tears! and, Paulus, ev'n *such* angel-love,
Living or dying, will I bear to thee! — Farewell!

[*Exit.*

FIRST CHRISTIAN.

Thou too must hence with us!

PAULUS.

Not yet — not yet!
Let me but watch the fluttering of her robe! ——
Alas! its last white gleam is faded — gone —
And swallow'd up in darkness, like my hopes,
My happiness — like all things fair or bright,
These eyes have ever lov'd to look upon!
Lead where ye will. The clods beneath these feet
Have scarce less life or consciousness than he
Whose foot is pressing them, with a dull hope
To share their utter senselessness ere long.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.

A Hall in the Palace of Piso. Piso and Euphas.

PISO.

Why! thou hast trusted in thy youth and bloom,
As if the eye whose lightnings thou hast braved
Were woman's! Thou hast yet to learn, fair boy,
The mower in his earnest task spares not
The wild-flower in his path. It moves my mirth
That with such hope thou shouldst have sought my face,
Intruding on my midnight privacy,
To pour thine intercession in mine ear.
Tell me, I pray, didst thou in sooth believe
Thy boyish eloquence and raven curls
Might move the settled purpose of my soul?
Or is thy life too bitter in the bud,
That thou hast ta'en a way so sure and prompt
To nip its blossoming?

EUPHAS.

I know not which.
But if I *had* a hope, and it prove false,

Life were the sternest penalty thy wrath
Could bid my spirit bear.

PISO.

I doubt thee much.
When the young blood runs bounding through the veins,
And a strong thought is on the working soul,
And death goes wandering far and heeds thee not,
'T is easy then to scorn thine absent foe.
But if the monster turn upon thee fierce,
Whisp'ring a sudden summons in thine ear,
Checking thy youthful pulse with icy touch.
Flinging an utter darkness on thy hopes,
Boy! in that shudd'ring hour — it draweth nigh! —
I shall behold thy bright cheek blanch'd with fear,
And hear thee, in thine agony, implore
One day — one hour of that same precious life
Which now thou hold'st so cheap. How thou wilt rue
And wonder at thine own presumption strange,
And that insane and idle hope, which gave
Thee, in thy youth and folly, to my hand.
Ye gods! it was most strange!

EUPHAS.

To thee most strange,
Who of all earthly things alone dost hold

No sympathy with aught on earth. To thee
There is no power in words that can unfold
The steady faith and deep, absorbing love
That brought me here. — I have not yet said all.

PISO.

Not all? Why, that is stranger still. Methought
Thou hadst run through each supplicating phrase
Our language knows; and in good truth, although
The gods themselves are scarce more wont than I
To hear the voice of pray'r and agony,
Yet will I own mine ear hath never drunk
Tones and entreaties eloquent as thine.
Thou hast said much, fair lad, and said it well,
And said it all — in vain. — Dost hear?

EUPHAS.

I do.

PISO.

Why! thou art wondrous calm!

EUPHAS.

Thou man of blood!
I have not yet said all!

PISO.

But by the gods,
Thou hast! for I will hear no more this night.
To-morrow, if I 'm in an idle mood,
I 'll hear thee — on the cross!

EUPHAS.

I read thine eye,
That does not honor me with wrath or scorn,
But marks me with a proud, cold weariness.
Yet will I utter — what shall bid that eye
Flash fire!

PISO.

Poor fool! I marvel I have spent
Ev'n thus much time upon thee. Take him hence!
Where are the daring slaves who marshall'd thee?

EUPHAS.

Where is thy son?

PISO.

My son! — my son? saidst thou?

EUPHAS.

Aye! — where is *he?* thine only son? — and Paulus,
I think, the name he *nobly* bears.

PISO.

Gone forth
Upon some reckless revel, haply; I know not.
Seekest thou time, that with such idle quest ——

EUPHAS.

I seek thy vulnerable spot. If now
I fail!—Know'st thou not aught—whither—or how-—

PISO.

I tell thee, no! Read me thy riddle, boy!
The night wears on, and busy hours are mine
Ere to my couch ——

EUPHAS.

The couch unvisited
By sleep this night! Oh, were it not for those
Whose lives hang on this chance, I could relent.
How can I aim so near a father's heart?

PISO.

This tardiness and would-be mystery
Portend a mighty tale. Look it *be* such.
Why! what knitted brow and troubled eye!
Say on, and hence!

EUPHAS.

Enough!—Thou hast a son.
Whose life hangs on a word—a syllable—
Breath'd from thy lips!

PISO.

Well! excellent! go on.

EUPHAS.

He is a hostage 'mid an armed band,
A pledge thou canst not sport with, for the lives
We came to beg. Give me my father back,
My father and his friends from yonder cells,
And thou shalt have thy haughty son unscath'd
By Christian swords! But if *they* bleed——

PISO.

Say on;
I would hear all.

EUPHAS.

If to th' appointed spot
They come not all — age, youth, and woman — all —
Ere the red sun shall look aslant the hills
With its first beam, he dies!

PISO.

And is this all?

EUPHAS.

Aye. Now have I said much — and well — and not,
Perchance, in vain!

PISO.

Lad, were there but one chance
Thou e'er might'st profit by the kind advice,
I would exhort thee, when again thou seek'st
To save thy life by trick and cunning tale,
Make thou thy story *probable!* — Dost hear?

EUPHAS.

How! dost thou doubt?

PISO.

I should as soon believe thee,

If thou assertedst that the ocean waves
Were dashing high around my palace gates;
Or that the thousand Christians I have slain
Were seeking me along the silent streets,
Moaning and glimmering in their phantom-shrouds,
At this lone hour of midnight. —— Thou art pale:
In the extremity of fear hast thou
Devis'd a tale so wild?

EUPHAS.

I may be pale;
But re-peruse my brow, and see if there
Is aught that tokens fear!

PISO.

Boy! there is that
Within thy pensive eye I cannot meet;
I have beheld a face so like to thine.
Else had our parley shorter been. — Away!
I will behold — will hear thy voice no more!

EUPHAS.

Forth to the dungeon must I go?

PISO.

Aye! lad;
The deepest — darkest!

EUPHAS.

So it be but that
My father shareth, I care not how dark.
Darker will be to-morrow's noon to thee,
Thou childless sire!

PISO.

Can it be true? I feel
A cold and sudden shudd'ring in my veins.
Tell me once more — I know 't is mockery —
Yet would I hear thy tale again, false boy!
My son, thou say'st ——

EUPHAS.

Circled with Christian swords,
Stands waiting thy behest! for those, whose friends
This night have fall'n within thy fatal grasp,
Now hold thine own proud darling fast in bonds,
Where rescue or protecting power of thine
Cannot avail him aught. *Revenge* thou may'st,
But canst not save him — but by sparing those
Whom thou didst purpose for a cruel death.

PISO.

And where — in what dark nook ——

EUPHAS.

Nay, tyrant! but
Thou canst not dream that I will answer thee.

PISO.

I will send forth my soldiers — they shall search —
It may be false — but they shall overrun
Palace and hut, and search each hiding-place
In all this mighty city, till my son
Be found!

EUPHAS.

When he *is* found, that son will be ——
Knowest thou what? Sunrise the hour — Remember.

PISO.

Now by the great god Mars! but thou shalt die
For this, be thy tale false or true. Till now
I never felt these firm knees tremble. — Speak!
How fell my noble Paulus in the gripe
Of yonder rav'ning wolves?

EUPHAS.

How came he there?
Alas! — that question hath a dagger's point.

Man! I would rather die than answer it!

PISO.

But thou *shalt* speak, or I will have thy bones
Wrench'd from their sockets.—Stripling!—Silent still?
Bethink thee, thou art young and delicate:
Thy tender limbs have a keen sense of pain!

EUPHAS.

In dark thoughts am I lost — but not of that!

PISO.

Answer me! rouse thee from thy trance; thou 'lt find
A stern reality around thee soon.

EUPHAS.

It is a thought to search the very soul!
And yet — so young — she *may* repent. —— List, Piso!
It is a short but melancholy tale,
And if my heart break not the while, in brief
Will I declare how fell thy haughty son
Into the power of Christian foes. — He sought ——
I have a sister — she is beautiful —
Touched by three summers more than I have seen
Into the first young grace of womanhood —
Lovely, yet thoughtful. —— Oh, my God! it comes

Upon my soul too heavily! — Proud Roman!
Art thou not answer'd?

PISO.

I am. He dies.

EUPHAS.

How!

PISO.

Ye shall all die. In my mighty wrath
I have no words — no frenzy now! 'T is deep,
Too deep for outward show! — But he shall die,
The base, degenerate boy!

EUPHAS.

Thou speakest now
In the first burst of fury.

PISO.

That *my* son
Should love a Christian girl! Foul — foul disgrace!
Fury! saidst thou? I am calm. Look on me.

EUPHAS.

I see the tiger crouching ere he springs.

I mark the livid cheek — the bloodshot eye —
Hands firmly clench'd and swollen veins — are *these*
Tokens of inward calm?

PISO.

Now am I free!
My son hangs not upon my palsied arm,
Checking the half-dealt blow!

EUPHAS.

Dost thou exult?
Oh Heaven! to think such spirits are! Wilt thou,
Piso, indeed forget ——

PISO.

Strange error thine
To tell this secret, boy! — I lov'd my son,
And lov'd nought else on earth. In him alone
Center'd the wild, blind fondness of a heart
All adamant, except for him! and thou —
Thou, foolish youth, hast made me hate and scorn
Him whom my pride and love —— Knowest thou not
Thou hast but sealed thy fate? His life had been
More precious to me than the air I breathe;
And cheerfully I would have yielded up
A thousand Christian dogs from yonder dens

To save one hair upon his head. But now —
A Christian maid!—Were there none other? — Gods!
Shame and a shameful death be his! — and thine!

EUPHAS.

It is the will of God. My hopes burnt dim
Ev'n from the first, and are extinguish'd now.
The thirst of blood hath rudely chok'd at last
The one affection which thy dark breast knew,
And thou art *man* no more. Let me but die
First of thy victims ——

PISO.

Would that she among them ——
Where is the sorceress? I fain would see
The beauty that hath witch'd Rome's noblest youth.

EUPHAS.

Her's is a face thou never wilt behold.

PISO.

I will. — On her shall fall my worst revenge;
And I will know what foul and magic arts ——
[*Miriam glides in. A pause.*
Beautiful shadow! in this hour of wrath
What dost thou here? In life thou wert too meek,

Too gentle for a lover stern as I.
And since I saw thee last, my days have been
Deep steep'd in sin and blood! What seekest thou?
I have grown old in strife, and hast thou come,
With thy dark eyes and their soul-searching glance,
To look me into peace? — It cannot be.
Go back, fair spirit, to thine own dim realms!
He whose young love thou didst reject on earth
May tremble at this visitation strange,
But never can know peace or virtue more!
Thou wert a Christian, and a Christian dog
Did win thy precious love. — I have good cause
To hate and scorn the whole detested race;
And till I meet that man, whom most of all
My soul abhors, will I go on and slay!
Fade, vanish — shadow bright! — In vain that look!
That sweet, sad look! — My lot is cast in blood!

MIRIAM.

Oh, say not so!

PISO.

The voice that won me first!
Oh, what a tide of recollections rush
Upon my drowning soul! — my own wild love —
Thy scorn — the long, long days of blood and guilt

That since have left their footprints on my fate!—
The dark, dark nights of fever'd agony,
When, 'mid the strife and struggling of my dreams,
The gods sent thee at times to hover round,
Bringing the mem'ry of those peaceful days
When I beheld thee first!—But never yet
Before my waking eyes hast thou appear'd
Distinct and visible as now!—Fair Spirit!
What wouldst thou have?

MIRIAM.

Oh, man of guilt and woe!
Thine own dark phantasies are busy now,
Lending unearthly seeming to a thing
Of earth, as thou art!

PISO

How! Art thou not *she?*
I know that face! I never yet beheld
One like to it among earth's loveliest.
Why dost thou wear *that* semblance, if thou art
A thing of mortal mould?—Oh, better meet
The wailing ghosts of those whose blood doth clog
My midnight dreams, than that half-pitying eye!

MIRIAM.

Thou art a wretched man! and I do feel
Pity ev'n for the suff'ring guilt hath brought.
But from the quiet grave I have not come,
Nor from the shadowy confines of the world
Where spirits dwell, to haunt thy midnight hour.
The disembodied should be passionless,
And wear not eyes that swim in earth-born tears,
As mine do now!—Look up, thou conscience-struck!

PISO.

Off! off! —— She touched me with her damp, cold
hand!
But 't was a hand of flesh and blood! — Away! —
Come thou not near me till I study thee.

MIRIAM.

Why are thine eyes so fix'd and wild? thy lips
Convuls'd and ghastly white? Thine own dark sins,
Vexing thy soul, have clad me in a form
Thou dar'st not look upon — I know not why.
But I must speak to thee. 'Mid thy remorse,
And the unwonted terrors of thy soul,
I must be heard — for God hath sent me here.

PISO.

Who — who hath sent thee here?

MIRIAM.

The Christian's God,
The God thou knowest not: He hath given me strength,
And led me safely through the broad lone streets,
Ev'n at the midnight hour! My heart sunk not,
My noiseless foot paced on unfaltering
Through the long colonnades, where stood aloft
Pale gods and goddesses on either hand,
Bending their sightless eyes on me! by founts,
Waking with ceaseless plash the midnight air!
Through moonlit squares, where ever and anon
Flash'd from some dusky nook the red torchlight,
Flung on my path by passing reveller.
And *He* hath brought me here before thy face;
And it was *He* who smote thee even now
With a strange, nameless fear.

PISO.

Girl! name it not.
I deem'd I look'd on one, whose bright young face
First glanc'd upon me 'mid the shining leaves
Of a green bower in sunny Palestine,

In my youth's prime! I knew the dust,
The grave's corroding dust, had soiled
That spotless brow long since. — A shadow fell
Upon the soul that never yet knew fear.
But it is past. Earth holds not what I dread;
And what the gods did make me, am I now.
What seekest thou?

EUPHAS.

Miriam! go thou hence.
Why shouldst thou die?

MIRIAM.

Brother! ——

PISO.

Ha! is this so?
Now, by the gods! — Bar — bar the gates, ye slaves!
If they escape me now —— Why this is good!
I had not dream'd of hap so glorious.
She that beguil'd my son! His sister!

MIRIAM.

Peace!
Name not with tongue unhallow'd love like ours.

PISO.

Thou art *her* image — and the mystery
Confounds my purposes. Take other form,
Foul sorceress, and I will baffle thee!

MIRIAM.

I have no other form than this God gave;
And he already hath stretch'd forth his hand
And touch'd it for the grave.

PISO.

It is most strange.
Is not the air around her full of spells?
Give me the son thou hast seduc'd!

MIRIAM.

Hear, Piso!
Thy son hath seen me — lov'd me — and hath won
A heart too prone to worship noble things,
Although of earth — and he, alas! *was* earth's!
I strove — I pray'd — in vain! In all things else
I might have stirr'd his soul's best purposes.
But for the pure and cheering faith of Christ,
There was no entrance in that iron soul.
And I —— Amid such hopes, despair arose,

And laid a with'ring hand upon my heart.
I feel it yet! — We parted! Aye — this night
We met to meet no more.

EUPHAS.

Sister! my tears ——
They choke my words —— else ——

MIRIAM.

Euphas, thou wert wroth
When there was little cause; — I lov'd thee more.
Thy very frowns in such a holy cause
Were beautiful. The scorn of virtuous youth,
Looking on fancied sin, is noble.

PISO.

Maid!
Hath then my son withstood thy witchery,
And on this ground ye parted?

MIRIAM.

It is so.
Alas, that I rejoice to tell it thee.

PISO.

Nay, well thou may'st, for it hath wrought his pardon.

That he *had* lov'd thee would have been a sin
Too full of degradation — infamy,
Had not these cold and aged eyes themselves
Beheld thee in thy loveliness! And yet, bold girl!
Think not thy Jewish beauty is the spell
That works on one grown old in deeds of blood.
I have look'd calmly on when eyes as bright
Were drown'd in tears of bitter agony,
When forms as full of grace — and pride, perchance —
Were writhing in the sharpness of their pain,
And cheeks as fair were mangled ——

EUPHAS.

Tyrant! cease.
Wert thou a fiend, such brutal boasts as these
Were not for ears like hers!

MIRIAM.

I tremble not.
He spake of pardon for his guiltless son,
And that includeth life for those I love.
What need I more?

EUPHAS.

Let us go hence at once.
Bid thou thy myrmidons unbar the gates,

That shut our friends from light and air.

PISO.

Not yet,
My haughty boy, for we have much to say,
Ere you two pretty birds go free. Chafe not!
Ye are caged close, and can but flutter here
Till I am satisfied.

MIRIAM.

How! hast thou chang'd ——

PISO.

Nay — but I must detain ye till I ask ——

MIRIAM.

Detain us if thou wilt — But look!

PISO.

At what?

MIRIAM.

There, through yon western arch! the moon sinks low.
The mists already tinge her orb with blood.
Methinks I feel the breeze of morn ev'n now.
Know'st thou the hour?

PISO.

I do — but one thing more
I fain would know; for after this wild night
Let me no more behold you. Why didst thou,
Bold, dark-hair'd boy, wear in those pleading eyes,
When thou didst name thy boon, an earnest look
That fell familiar on my soul? And thou,
The lofty, calm, and oh! most beautiful!
Why are not only that soul-searching glance,
But ev'n thy features and thy silver voice
So like to her's I lov'd long years ago,
Beneath Judea's palms? Whence do ye come?

MIRIAM.

For me, I bear my own dear mother's brow;
Her eye, her form, her very voice are mine.
So, in his tears, my father oft hath said.
We liv'd beneath Judea's shady palms,
Until that saintlike mother faded — drooped —
And died. Then hither came we o'er the waves,
And till this night have worshipped faithfully
The One, True, Living God, in secret peace.

PISO.

Thou art her child! I could not harm thee now.

Oh wonderful! that things so long forgot, —
A love I thought so crush'd and trodden down
Ev'n by the iron tread of passions wild —
Ambition — pride — and worst of all, revenge —
Revenge that hath shed seas of Christian blood! —
To think this heart was once so waxen soft,
And then congeal'd so hard, that nought of all
Which hath been since could ever have the pow'r
To wear away the image of that girl —
That fair, young, Christian girl! — 'T was a wild love!
But I was young, a soldier in strange lands,
And she, in very gentleness, said nay
So timidly, I hoped — until, ye gods!
She lov'd another! — Yet I slew him not!
I fled! — Oh, had I met him since!

EUPHAS.

Come, sister!
The hours wear on.

PISO.

Ye shall go forth in joy,
And take with you yon pris'ners. Send my son,
Him whom *she* did not bear — home to these arms,
And go ye out of Rome with all your train.

I will shed blood no more; for I have known
What sort of peace deep-glutted vengeance brings.
My son is brave, but of a gentler mind
Than I have been. His eyes shall never more
Be grieved with sight of sinless blood pour'd forth
From tortur'd veins. Go forth, ye gentle two!
Children of her who might perhaps have pour'd
Her own meek spirit o'er my nature stern,
Since the bare image of her buried charms,
Soft gleaming from your youthful brows, hath pow'r
To stir my spirit thus! But go ye forth!
Ye leave an alter'd and a milder man
Than him ye sought. Tell Paulus this,
To quicken his young steps.

MIRIAM.

Now may the peace
That follows just and worthy deeds, be thine!
And may deep truths be born, 'mid thy remorse,
In the recesses of thy soul, to make
That soul ev'n yet a shrine of holiness.

EUPHAS.

Piso! how shall we pass yon steel-clad men,
Keeping stern vigil round the dungeon gate?

PISO.

Take ye my well-known ring—and here—the list—
Aye, this is it, methinks: show these—Great gods!

EUPHAS.

What is there on yon scroll which shakes him thus?

MIRIAM.

A name, at which he points with stiff'ning hand,
And eyeballs full of wrath!—Alas! alas!
I guess too well.—My brother, droop thou not.

PISO.

Your *father*, did ye say? Was it *his* life
Ye came to beg?

MIRIAM.

His life; but not alone
The life so dear to us; for he hath friends
Sharing his fetters and his final doom.

PISO.

Little reck I of *them*. Tell me his name!

[*A pause.*

Speak, boy! or I will tear thee piecemeal!

MIRIAM.

Stay!
Stern son of violence! the name thou askest
Is — is — Thraseno!

PISO.

Well I knew it, girl!
Now, by the gods, had I not been entranc'd,
I sooner had conjectur'd this. — Foul name!
Thus do I tear thee out — and even thus
Rend with my teeth. — Oh rage! she wedded him,
And ever since that hated name hath been
The voice of serpents in mine ear! — But now ——
Why go ye not? Here is your list! and all,
Aye, every one whose name is here set down,
Will my good guards forthwith release you!

MIRIAM.

Piso!
In mercy mock us not! children of her
Whom thou didst love ——

PISO.

Aye, maid! but ye are *his*
Whom I do hate! That chord is broken now —

Its music hushed! Is *she* not in her grave, —
And *he* — within my grasp?

MIRIAM.

Where is thy peace —
Thy penitence?

PISO.

Fled all — a moon-beam brief
Upon a stormy sea. That magic name
Hath rous'd the wild, loud winds again. — Begone!
Save whom ye may.

MIRIAM.

Piso! I go not hence
Until my father's name be on this scroll.

PISO.

Take root, then, where thou art! for by dark Styx
I swear ——

MIRIAM.

Nay, swear thou not, till I am heard.
Hast thou forgot thy son?

PISO.

No! let him die,
So that I have my long-deferred revenge!
Thy lip grows pale!—Art thou not answer'd now?

MIRIAM.

Deep horror falls upon me! Can it be
Such demon spirits dwell on earth?

PISO.

Bold maiden!
While thou art safe, go hence; for in his might
The tiger wakes within me!

MIRIAM.

Be it so.
He can but rend me where I stand. And here,
Living or dying, will I raise my voice
In a firm hope! The God that brought me here
Is round me in the silent air. On me
Falleth the influence of an unseen Eye!
And in the strength of secret, earnest pray'r,
This awful consciousness doth nerve my frame.
Thou man of evil and ungoverned soul!
My father thou *mayst* slay! Flames will not fall

From heaven to scorch and wither thee! The earth
Will gape not underneath thy feet! and peace,
Mock, hollow, *seeming* peace, may shadow still
Thy home and hearth! But deep within thy breast
A fierce, consuming fire shall ever dwell.
Each night shall ope a gulf of horrid dreams
To swallow up thy soul. The livelong day
That soul shall yearn for peace and quietness,
As the hart panteth for the water brooks,
And know that even in *death* — is no repose!
And this shall be thy life! Then a dark hour
Will surely come ——

PISO.

Maiden, be warned! All this
I know. It moves me not.

MIRIAM.

Nay, one thing more
Thou knowest not. There is on all this earth —
Full as it is of young and gentle hearts —
One man alone that loves a wretch like thee;
And he, thou say'st, must die! All other eyes
Do greet thee with a cold or wrathful look,
Or, in the baseness of their fear, shun thine;
And he whose loving glance alone spake peace,

Thou say'st must die in youth! Thou know'st not yet
The deep and bitter sense of loneliness,
The throes and achings of a childless heart.
Which yet will all be thine! Thou know'st not yet
What 't is to wander 'mid thy spacious halls,
And find them desolate! wildly to start
From thy deep musings at the distant sound
Of voice or step like his, and sink back sick—
Aye! sick at heart—with dark remembrances!
To dream thou seest him as in years gone by,
When in his bright and joyous infancy,
His laughing eyes amid thick curls sought thine,
And his soft arms were twin'd around thy neck,
And his twin rosebud lips just lisp'd thy name—
Yet feel in agony 't is but a dream!
Thou know'st not yet what 't is to lead the van
Of armies hurrying on to victory,
Yet, in the pomp and glory of that hour,
Sadly to miss the well-known snowy plume,
Whereon thine eyes were ever proudly fix'd
In battle-field!—to sit, at midnight deep,
Alone within thy tent—all shuddering—
When, as the curtain'd door lets in the breeze,
Thy fancy conjures up the gleaming arms
And bright young hero-face of him who once
Had been most welcome there!—and worst of all—

PISO.

It is enough! The gift of prophecy
Is on thee, maid! A pow'r that is not thine
Looks out from that dilated, awful form —
Those eyes deep flashing with unearthly light —
And stills my soul. — My Paulus must not die!
And yet — to give up thus the boon! ——

MIRIAM.

What boon?
A boon of blood? — To him, the good old man,
Death is not terrible, but only seems
A dark, short passage to a land of light,
Where, 'mid high ecstasy, he shall behold
Th' unshrouded glories of his Maker's face,
And learn all mysteries, and gaze at last
Upon th' ascended Prince, and never more
Know grief or pain, or part from those he loves!
Yet will his blood cry loudly from the dust,
And bring deep vengeance on his murderer!

PISO.

My Paulus must not die! — Let me revolve ——
Maiden! thy words have sunk into my soul;
Yet would I ponder ere I thus lay down

A purpose cherish'd in my inmost heart,
That which hath been my dream by night, — by day
My life's sole aim. Have I not deeply sworn,
Long years ere thou wert born, that should the gods
E'er give him to my rage — and yet I pause? —
Shall Christian vipers sting mine only son,
And I not crush them into nothingness?
Am I so pinion'd, vain, and powerless?
Work, busy brain! thy cunning must not fail.

[*Retires.*

EUPHAS.

My sister! thou art spent.

MIRIAM.

Not yet; although
The strange excitement of my spirit dies,
And stern suspense is fretting fast away
The ties which hold that spirit from its home,
Yet shall I linger till my task be done.
Look! on that moody brow what dost thou read?

EUPHAS.

Alas! no hope. And yet methinks a smile
Of inward exultation sudden gleams
Athwart his features, like a distant flash

Of lurid lightning 'mid thick clouds. My sister!
I like it not.

MIRIAM.

He marks us watching him,
And with a bright'ning aspect draweth nigh.

PISO.

Children! go hence in peace, for I have held
Communion with my own fierce, warring thoughts,
And there is something there which pleads your cause.
I cannot live on this dark earth alone;
I cannot die, if burden'd with *his* blood;
I cannot give my brave and only son
To buy the luxury of my revenge!
So ye have won your boon, and I must stake
My Paulus too on your fidelity!
Ye *might* deceive me; but I read you well
Two young, high-minded souls; — to you I trust
All that I hold most dear. In peace and hope
Go hence, and send him home.

MIRIAM.

Go hence! and how?
Leaving behind us those for whom we came?

PISO.

Fear not, for they shall follow thee. This hour,
This instant, will I take myself the way
That leads down to their dwellings dark and drear,
And set them free.

MIRIAM.

And we will cling to thee,
Blessing the hand which breaks a father's chains,
And thou shalt see our meeting, and rejoice
To think that *thou* hast caused such happiness.

PISO.

Nay, maiden! dost forget? My Paulus stands
In jeopardy, and ye may be too late!
Seek ye my son, while I release your friends.

EUPHAS.

Piso! we cannot sound the depths of guile
Within that cold and crafty breast;—but woe!
If we should trust, and be deceiv'd!

PISO.

How! do ye wrong me thus? Can such distrust
Spring up in youthful hearts?

MIRIAM.

We have good cause
To doubt a Pagan, when he talks of peace
Or mercy for his Christian foes. And yet ——

PISO.

Ye will go forth — for ye can do nought else.
It is your destiny.

MIRIAM.

We will not dream
There can be perfidy so base. We trust,
And by the confidence of innocence
Will we disarm thy wrath.

EUPHAS.

Nay, sister, more.
He cannot mock us now, for we still hold
Our pledge until his promise be redeem'd.

PISO.

Then go. If harm betide my son —— I see
A dull grey light along the east! — Begone!

MIRIAM.

Swear to us first ——

PISO.

What would ye have? I swear,
Both by my gods and by the sacred Styx,
And by the precious blood of that one son,
That I will take your father and his friends
From yonder cells, and send them where ye list,
Before yon stars grow dim! Is it enough?

MIRIAM.

Alone too must they come.

PISO.

Aye, girl, alone.

MIRIAM.

And tell them they must seek that lonely spot
Where we all met three nights ago.

PISO.

I will.

Aught more?

MIRIAM.

No, nought. And now, when we behold
The glad procession drawing nigh, with joy
Will we release brave Paulus from our thrall,
And send him back to comfort thine old age.
And he will shield us from all other harm,
While we make haste to quit this bloody land,
Some, for a calmer home on earth — and one,
For yonder skies!

PISO.

Speed hence! watch o'er my son,
And by th' appointed hour ev'n yet your friends
Shall be with you. Remember, ye are bound
To loose him soon as ye descry their train;
And bid him borrow wings to fly and ease
A heart that hath been rack'd for him this night,
A heart that can be touch'd through him alone.

EUPHAS.

Let us depart, though fear and doubt still brood
Upon our souls.

MIRIAM.

Euphas! we will not leave

Such words to rankle in a soften'd heart.
Piso! the child of her whom thou once lov'd
Leaves thee a blessing for the kindly hope
Thy words have given. Thine be a long old age
Of calm and penitence — stayed by the arm
Of him whom I shall see but once — *once* more!
Farewell! I yield —— Euphas! uphold my steps.
This palace shall be his abode, when I
Am silent in my grave! Will he forget
That there was once a Miriam? — Lead forth;
The air will give me strength; and we will thank
Him who hath bid a gladsome light shine in
On hearts that were a chaos of despair.
My father saved!

PISO.

And I *may* be deceiv'd!
Yet I do trust you. — Haste! it is the dawn,
Gleaming through yon arcade, that bids your cheeks
Look pale, and dims my tapers thus. Depart: —
If ye should be too late, earth hath no cave
To hide you from my wrath!

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE III.

A rising Ground in a deserted Garden, near the City Walls. Paulus, and Christians keeping guard.

PAULUS.

I have gaz'd upward on yon twinkling gems
Until my eyes grew dim; and then have turn'd
To look upon the starlit face of things,
Obscure, yet beautiful, and watched the moon
Redd'ning 'mid earthborn mists, and verging fast
To yonder hilly west, each in its turn,—
Hoping the outward calm of things so fair
Might sink, as erst, into a troubled breast,
And breathe their own deep quiet o'er my soul.
Such things have been — but not for hours like these.
My brow is wet with dew — and yet burns on!
My eye drinks in a placid scene — yet fills,
Fills to the brim with silent, blinding tears!
And my heart beats against my aching breast
With throbs of agony! — My Miriam!
Thou in thine innocence wilt die! — aye, die
By a most cruel death! and I am here,

Bound in a strange and vile captivity!
'T was the sole hope — and now I feel, 't was vain!
I have no power to thrust the image stern
Out of my soul — thee, trembling, cold, and pale,
Bowing thy gentle head with murmur'd pray'rs
Beneath rough hands that bind thee to the cross.
Ye gods! the rest — the rest! — let me go mad,
Ye pitying gods, and so escape the worst,
Knowledge of that I cannot see, yet know.
And if, with strength by thrilling horror giv'n,
I call my wandering fancy home, and chain
Thought to the present —— What were death's worst pangs,
Could I but meet him in the battle-field,
Waving on high my own red-flashing sword,
Meeting my death-blow in the hottest strife,
Dying with shouts of victory in mine ears,
Frowns on my brow, proud smiles upon my lips?
Alas! the death of brutes — vain struggles, groans,
And butchery, await me here! —
Ye stars!
I watch you in your silent march! I mark
How one by one ye kiss yon shadowy hills,
And steal into the chambers of the west,
Sinking for ever from my eyes! — Farewell!
I shall not see you rise! — A few brief hours,

Ye, in your tranquil beauty, shall look down
Once more upon the spot where now I stand,
And there behold me not. But ye shall see
Token of bloody deed — the pure turf stain'd —
The scabbard haply cast in haste away —
And boughs strown rudely o'er the darkest spot
That tells the foul, foul tale of violence!
And what of this? or why, at such an hour,
Revel my thoughts in idle circumstance,
Availing nought? — I know not — I hold not
The clews that guide my spirit's wanderings;
And when they list, wild, dark imaginings
Arise unbidden! —
How! ye do grow dim,
Fair stars! The breeze that fans my cheek
Freshens with morn! and yonder glowing moon
Rests her broad rim upon the distant hills,
And I descry a cypress, tall and dark,
Drawn with its spreading boughs against her disk.
My hours ebb low! and I will watch no more
The heavens and earth with dim and aching eyes.
There is no calm within — and that without
Makes but a broken image on my soul —
A faithful mirror once of all things fair!

[*Sits down on a rock and hides his face with his hands.*]

[*A long pause.*

FIRST CHRISTIAN.

Friends ! by which path think ye they will approach ?

SECOND CHRISTIAN.

By this. We shall descry them from afar,
Threading the trees that fringe the river's bank.

PAULUS.

I had forgotten my stern guards — until
Their hollow voices woke me from vain dreams —
Vain dreams of other days ! — Ye gods, how light !
The sky is full of light ! and golden clouds
Are floating softly in the crimson east —
Fit homes for those pure, bright-wing'd, angel forms
Which, Miriam says, do serve her God in heav'n !
I hear the gentle stir of waking birds
Among the boughs that rustle o'er my head ;
And, motionless as rocks, I dimly see
The forms of men beneath the shadowing trees,
Leaning upon their swords — keeping stern guard
O'er one poor unarm'd wretch ! — Oh, why have I
No weapon in extremity like this ?

[*A pause.*

What was that soft, sweet note ? The prelude faint
To the full matin concert of glad hearts

Joying to see the morn! — Aye, there thou go'st,
Up to the skies, fair bird! and cleaving swift
The balmy air with soft and busy wing,
Thou pourest forth thy soul in melody!
I envy thee! — though I almost forget
What 't is that vexes me while thus I watch
Thine upward flight! But thou art gone — and I —
I am on earth, dark earth — and have no wings
To bear me up to yonder happy realms!

FIRST CHRISTIAN.

Seest thou aught?

SECOND CHRISTIAN.

Nought but the willow boughs,
Waving and whispering in the rising breeze.

PAULUS.

Ye watch in vain. They will not, cannot come!
My own wild hope hath fled; my heart is sick.
I hear chains rattling on their youthful limbs;
I see them gasping 'mid the dungeon damps,
Clos'd in with dark strong walls! They cannot come!

FIRST CHRISTIAN.

The hour draws nigh.

PAULUS.

Aye, on the river's face
Vanish the dull red specks, that all night long
Glimmer'd, in faint reflection of the lamps
That lit the student's task, the sick man's couch.
Life wakes throughout the city. — Rome, my home!
How beautiful art thou! — thus stealing forth
From the deep veiling darkness of the night, —
A wilderness of gardens, palaces,
And stately fanes! — I cannot see the roof,
The one proud roof I seek!

FIRST CHRISTIAN.

Pagan, I know
Thou fear'st not death. Art thou prepar'd to die!

PAULUS.

Aye, any death, save that thou purposest.
Had I a sword ——

FIRST CHRISTIAN.

Hast thou no need of pray'r?

PAULUS.

Of pray'r? Why should I pray? Have I not serv'd

Th' ungrateful gods too faithfully? Alas!
I know not what I say! — Trouble me not,
I do conjure thee, Christian! — Is 't the hour?
A mist is on mine eyes.

FIRST CHRISTIAN.

Not yet. There 's time ——

PAULUS.

O god of day! why are thy chariot wheels
So slow? Would that thy earliest beam had pow'r
To strike me into ashes! Such a death
Would have no horrors for a Roman youth.
But in cold blood —— Christian! what seest thou?

SECOND CHRISTIAN.

A wreath of mist that sails along the stream.

PAULUS.

I will be patient. Could I think of aught, —
No matter what — save *her*, and this vile death —
Such death as cowards die! — Could I but pierce,
Were it but with one brief and shudd'ring glance,
The cloudy curtain hanging o'er the grave! —
Oh! new, and strange, and awful, are the thoughts,
Dim forming in this whirling brain! Her words

Come thrilling back upon my soul with might
Most like the might of solemn truth, that wars
With blind and steadfast prejudice! — Ha! look!
Two forms come gliding yonder 'mid the trees!

FIRST CHRISTIAN.

They come! — What may this mean?

PAULUS.

Alas! — alone!

FIRST CHRISTIAN.

With weary steps and slow the pair ascend
The hill of blood — for such this spot must be!
They are indeed alone! and grief, methinks,
Is in their steps!

PAULUS.

She droops! their pray'r was vain;
And my stern father hath forgotten all
That gave his bosom aught of human touch.
His hand hath sign'd my early doom! — Ye gods!
Bear witness how I bless that bloody fate,
Since on the heads of yonder sinless pair
My father's hand hath wrought no cruel deed!

FIRST CHRISTIAN.

Their safety doth amaze me.

PAULUS.

Nay, the gods
Are sometimes touched by rarest innocence,
And do by miracle melt iron hearts.
Slowly they mount — Ha! hidden by thick boughs—
Christian! I do implore thee — do the deed!
Spare those mild youthful eyes the sight of blood,
Forth following the dagger's point! Be quick,
And so be merciful!

FIRST CHRISTIAN.

A deed so rash
Would bring down shame upon these silver hairs.
The sun hath not yet ris'n.

PAULUS.

Give me thy sword!
[*Wresting it from him.*

MIRIAM. [*Rushing in.*

Oh stay! When God hath barely giv'n me strength

To grasp thy robe, must I behold thy blood
Shed by thine own rash hand? *We* deem it guilt!

PAULUS.

Hath thy God giv'n thee pinions? Would, oh would
That I had died before that weary foot
Had climb'd the hill!

MIRIAM.

Indeed that foot *is* weary,
And the frame weak; and the internal striving
Of hope, and fear, and haste, hath lit no fire
Upon this cheek — and I stand hovering
On the grave's utmost verge. Yet glad, oh glad
Are the faint throbbings of this heart!

PAULUS.

How! — speak!

MIRIAM.

Doth not my soul speak from my joyous eyes?
They come! for God went with us, and his voice
Spake to the tyrant's heart.

EUPHAS. [*Entering.*

Aye, they are sav'd,

And thou, young heathen, spar'd for happier days.
Now haste thee hence in peace, and meditate
Hereafter, in thy calm and lonely hours,
Upon this night of strife and agony,
And on the faith that nerv'd young Christian hearts,
And on the strange success that crown'd their hopes.

PAULUS.

Mortals are ye — and more than mortal pow'r
Hath wrought in this! But for *my* gods — alas!
To them I have not pray'd this dreadful night.
Oh, what is *that* faith worth which thus forsakes
Its votary in trial's darkest hour?
It might have been that thou hadst softly sapp'd
My youth's belief — and so it proudly stood
Until the blast came by — and then it shook.
My gods! I could not bear to think of them!
Why is my brain so dizzy?

MIRIAM.

Friends, watch still!
Soon as ye see our brethren drawing nigh,
The Pagan must away. Paulus, till then,
Is it a sin that dying lips should breathe
Words that pertain to earth and earthly things?

Thy faith I may not hope to shake — and next
Would I conjure thee never to forget
The voice, the face, the words, the dying love
Of her whose warring love and faith have dug
Her own untimely grave — have worn away
Her hopes, her nerves, her life, with secret waste.
Paulus! forget thou not, in thy proud halls,
Beneath thy father's smile, in battle-field,
Or most of all, in the dark solemn hour
When midnight sheds her spirit on thy soul,
The words I 've utter'd in those latter days
Of our wild love, when failing hope, dim fear,
And a vague consciousness that I *must* yield,
Must give thee up to darkness, came to add
A sad and awful fervor to my words.
Oh! it must work — it *will!* That memory
Within thy soul will yet have mighty pow'r!
Thou wast not made for base idolatry!

PAULUS.

Beloved! in this hour of hope and joy
Why is the thought of death upon thy soul!
Why is thy voice more sad than the lone bird's,
Mourning her wounded or imprison'd mate?
Speak of thy faith, love, if thou wilt; and I
Will mutely listen still — although farewell

Hang with a wild and melancholy tone
On every strain;—but oh, talk not of death!

EUPHAS.

My sister! thou art pale, weary, and worn;
And care hath wrung thy young, elastic soul—
Wrung out its very energies and hopes!
But, in a calmer land, we soon shall find
Repose, the wounded spirit's balm, and peace
Shall draw sweet music from thine unstrung mind.
Thy cheek again shall bloom, thine eye grow bright,
Beneath thy father's mild approving smiles;
Thy seraph voice, ere long, at vesper hour
Shall fearless wake the hymn or murmur'd pray'r,
In full communion with fond, faithful hearts!
Oh, bright and blessed days await us yet,
Brighter by contrast with the gloomy past!
Dear Miriam, talk thou not of death!—Alas!
That mournful smile!

MIRIAM.

Ye know not, cannot know,
How surely death has set his mouldering seal
Upon this brow. Must I not *speak* of him?
He is so near me, that his shadow falls
Ev'n now across my path.

EUPHAS.

Thou art deceiv'd!
It cannot be. The sickness of the soul—
Not of the body—is upon thee!

MIRIAM.

Brother,
Both! But 't is long since in the greater pain
I have forgot the less. What were to me
The pangs that rack'd my heart and throbbing brain,
The fever burning in my veins, the ice
That suddenly, beneath a noonday sun,
At times congeal'd my blood—while o'er my soul
A fiercer agony held sway?—Ere long
I must depart; and I but wait a while
To bear my aged father's blessing hence.
I would that he might see how peacefully
The spirit of his child will pass. To him
That holy sight will rise, in after times,
Full, full of blessed, calm, consoling thoughts!

PAULUS.

Oh Miriam! I am here—and soon, thou say'st,
Must hence. Hast thou no word, no glance, no thought
For me? I look upon thee steadily,

And read not death on that pale cheek! — Belov'd!
I do conjure thee, talk of life and hope —
For there *is* hope — of which thou dost not dream —
If death come not to dash th' untasted cup
Into the dust!

MIRIAM.

Of Life and Hope! Such themes
Are fittest for the hour of death — and they
Are in my mind when most I speak of it.
Euphas! why dost *thou* weep? The heritage
Of Truth is thine; thou knowest what death is,
And that to me it is no thing of fear.
Thou must not weep! — But *thou* — alas, my Paulus!
The curse to lose the thing thou lovest most,
Without one hope, one comfort in thy grief,
Will soon be on thee! Thou shalt shortly find
Where hope is not, 't were better memory
Might die! — And yet — forget me not! Although
Thou thinkest never to behold again
Her thou didst love, in this world — or the next —
Forget me not! Though long and proud thy course,
An hour may come ——

FIRST CHRISTIAN.

The sun hath ris'n!

MIRIAM.

Just God!

EUPHAS.

I had forgotten all! — Oh sinful heart!
Look! Miriam, look, if thou seest aught! — for me,
Mine eyes are glaz'd with tears.

MIRIAM.

And mine are dim —
But not with tears.

FIRST CHRISTIAN.

There is no sign of life
Along the river's bank! The sun ——

PAULUS.

'T is vain,
Christians, 't is vain. I knew it from the first.
How ye two 'scap'd, I know not; but I know
This blood must flow. Ye never will behold
The friends whom ye expect.

FIRST CHRISTIAN.

The leopard yet

Hath never chang'd his spots. Thy sire craves blood,
The earth craves thine.

MIRIAM.

His blood! what mean thy words?

FIRST CHRISTIAN.

Is not the sun's whole disk above the hills?
And I have three fair boys, whom that same sun
Will watch through torments ere the day be clos'd.
The murderer's son stands there! Shall I not strike?

MIRIAM.

Art thou a follower of Christ? — Alas!
Thou pure and gentle One! who walkedst earth
Amid earth's bloodiest, sinless! — from whom
No shame, no wrong, no agony, could draw
One word of bitterness, thou hast not left
Thy spirit in the hearts of all who bear
Thy holy name.

EUPHAS.

The guiltless shall not die.

FIRST CHRISTIAN.

Are ye Thraseno's children? Shall your sire

Hang agonizing yonder on the cross,
And ye stand here, bending your tearful eyes
Upon the tyrant's hope and joy? — Young friends,
For some dark purpose did he spare two lives.
But for our other friends — the hour is past —
They come not — ye were mock'd — and just revenge
Leans on that youth and beckons us! — My boys!
My three dear boys! — He dies!

MIRIAM.

Stay, Jew in heart!
What is 't emerges from the grove?

FIRST CHRISTIAN.

Ha! — where?

EUPHAS.

'T is so — I see them plain — a feeble band —
Loos'd from the spoiler's grasp. O Thou on high,
Whose mighty hand doth hold the proud man's heart,
Thine be the praise!

MIRIAM.

Down on thy knees, rash man.
Look on thy bloodless hands, and render thanks
Where thanks are due.

FIRST CHRISTIAN.

I am condemn'd!
And 'mid the joy wherewith I shall receive
My children to these arms, will shame arise.

MIRIAM.

And penitence be born of shame. Haste, Paulus!
Thou must away.

PAULUS.

Peace! — peace!

MIRIAM.

The hour is come.
It was the promise to thy sire ——

PAULUS.

But, maiden!
The promise was not mine. It binds me not;
And of thy father I have that to ask
May give a dark mind peace. ——

EUPHAS.

What may it mean?
Miriam, see you the faces of the group?

MIRIAM.

Oh no! Whate'er I gaze upon is robed
In strange and lurid light. The grave's dim hues
Are gathering fast o'er earth. — Art thou not pale?

EUPHAS.

It may be. Fear and doubt are on my soul.
Paulus, look thou! — yon troop come not, methinks,
Like prisoners let loose, like victims snatch'd
From agony and death! No buoyancy
Is in their steps — no song upon their lips —
No triumph on their brows! They pause! — now closer
They draw their feeble ranks!

PAULUS.

Grief and dismay
Are with that group.

EUPHAS.

Oh God! I see him not!
My father is not there!

MIRIAM.

Nay, Euphas — stay!
Kneel humbly here with me, and pray for strength.

Wilt thou forsake me in an hour like this?

[*A pause.*

FIRST CHRISTIAN.

They come.
Raise — raise your drooping heads.

EUPHAS.

I dare not look.

[*Christians enter, and the group opening, displays the body of Thraseno on a bier.*]

PAULUS. [*Springing forward.*

Oh foul and bloody deed! — and wretched son!
That knows too well whose treachery hath done this!

AN AGED CHRISTIAN.

Thus saith the man of blood, — "My word is kept.
I send you him I promis'd. Have ye kept
Your faith with me? If so, there is nought more
Between us three. Bury your dead, — and fly!"

FIRST CHRISTIAN.

A ruffian's strangling hand hath grasp'd this throat!
And on the purple lip convulsion still
Lingers with awful tale of violence.

Oh, fearful was the strife from which arose
Our brother's spirit to its peaceful home!
Let grief, let wrath, let each unquiet thought
Be still, and round the just man's dust ascend
The voice of pray'r.

PAULUS.

Not yet! oh, not *quite* yet!
Hear me, ye pale and horror-stricken throng!
Hear me, thou sobbing boy! my Miriam, turn —
Turn back thy face from the dim world of death,
And hear thy lover's voice! — What seest thou
In the blue heav'ns with fixed and eager gaze?

MIRIAM.

Angels are gathering in the eastern sky —
The wind is playing 'mid their glittering plumes —
The sunbeams dance upon their golden harps —
Welcome is on their fair and glorious brows!
Hath not a holy spirit pass'd from earth,
Whom ye come forth to meet, seraphic forms?
Oh, fade not, fade not yet! — or take me too,
For earth grows dark beneath my dazzled eye!

PAULUS.

Miriam! in mercy spread not yet thy wings!

Spurn me not from the gate that opes for thee!

MIRIAM.

In which world do I stand! A voice there was
Of pray'r and woe. *That* must have rung on earth!
Say on.

PAULUS.

Christians! I must indeed say on,
Or my full heart will break! — No heathen is 't
On whom ye gaze with low'ring, angry eyes.
My father's blood — his name, his faith, his gods —
I here abjure; and only ask your pray'rs,
The purifying water on my brow,
And words of hope to soothe my penitence —
Ere I atone my father's crimes with blood.

[*Silence.*

And will none speak? Am I indeed cast off —
Rejected utterly? Will no one teach
The sinner how to frame the Christian's pray'r,
Help me to know the Christian's God aright,
Wash from my brow the deep-red stains of guilt?
Must I then die in ignorance and sin?

MIRIAM.

O earth! be not so busy with my soul!

Paulus! what wouldest thou?

PAULUS.

The rite that binds
New converts to your peaceful faith.

MIRIAM.

Good brethren,
Hear ye his pray'r! Search ye the penitent,
Bear him forth with you in your pilgrimage,
And when his soul in earnest hath drunk in
The spirit of Christ's law, seal him for Heav'n! ——
And now — would that my chains were broke! Half-freed
My spirit struggles 'neath the dust that lies
So heavy on her wings! — Paulus, we part.
But oh, how different is the parting hour
From that which crush'd my hopeless spirit erst!
Joy — joy and triumph now ——

PAULUS.

Oh, name not joy.

MIRIAM.

Why not? If but one ray of light from Heav'n
Hath reach'd thy soul, I may indeed rejoice!

Ev'n thus, in coming days, from martyrs' blood
Shall earnest saints arise to do God's work.
And thus with slow, sure, silent step shall Truth
Tread the dark earth, and scatter Light abroad,
Till Peace and Righteousness awake, and lead
Triumphant, in the bright and joyous blaze,
Their happy myriads up to yonder skies!

EUPHAS.

Sister! with such a calm and sunny brow
Stand'st thou beside our murder'd father's bier?

MIRIAM.

Euphas, thy hand! — Aye, clasp thy brother's hand!
Ye fair and young apostles! go ye forth —
Go side by side beneath the sun and storm,
A dying sister's blessing on your toils!
When ye have pour'd the oil of Christian peace
On passions rude and wild — when ye have won
Dark, sullen souls from wrath and sin to God —
Whene'er ye kneel to bear upon your pray'rs
Repentant sinners up to yonder heav'n,
Be it in palace — dungeon — open air —
'Mid friends — 'mid raging foes — in joy — in grief —
Deem not ye pray alone; — man never doth!
A sister spirit, ling'ring near, shall fill

The silent air around you with her pray'rs,
Waiting till ye too lay your fetters down,
And come to your reward! — Go fearless forth;
For glorious truth wars with you, and shall reign.
[*Seeing the bier.*
My father! sleepest thou? — Aye, a sound sleep.
Dreams *have* been there — oh, horrid dreams! — but now,
The silver beard heaves not upon thy breast,
The hand I press is deadly, deadly cold,
And thou wilt dream, wilt never suffer, more.
Why gaze I on this clay! It was not this —
Not this I reverenc'd and lov'd! ——
My friends,
Raise ye the dirge; and though I hide my face
In my dead father's robe, think not I weep.
I would not have the sight of those I love
Too well, — ev'n at this solemn hour, too well, —
Disturb my soul's communion with the blest!
My brother, — sob not so!

DIRGE.

Shed not the wild and hopeless tear
Upon our parted brother's bier;

With heart subdued and steadfast eye,
Oh, raise each thought to yonder sky!

Aching brow and throbbing breast
In the silent grave shall rest;
But the clinging dust in vain
Weaves around the soul its chain.

Spirit, quit this land of tears,
Hear the song of rolling spheres;
Shall our wild and selfish pray'rs
Call thee back to mortal cares?

Sainted spirit! fare thee well!
More than mortal tongue can tell
Is the joy that even now
Crowns our blessed martyr's brow!

EUPHAS.

Paulus, arise!
We must away. Thy father's wrath ——

PAULUS.

Oh, peace!
My Miriam, — speak to us! — She doth not stir!

EUPHAS.

Methought I saw her ringlets move!

FIRST CHRISTIAN.

Alas!
'T was but the breeze that lifted those dark locks!
They never will wave more.

EUPHAS.

It cannot be!
Let me but look upon her face! — Oh God!
Death sits in that glazed eye!

FIRST CHRISTIAN.

Aye, while we sung
Her father's dirge — across the young and fair
I saw death's shudder pass. Nay, turn not pale.
Borne on the solemn strain, her spirit soar'd
Most peacefully on high. ——
Chasten'd ye are,
And bound by sorrow to your holy task.
Arise, — and in your youthful memories
Treasure the end of innocence. — Away,
Beneath far other skies, weep — if ye can —
The gain of those ye lov'd.

EUPHAS.

Lift this fair dust.—
My brother! speechless, tearless grief for her
Who listeneth for thy pray'rs?

PAULUS.

My mind is dark.
The faith which she bequeath'd must lighten it.
Come forth, and I will learn.—Oh Miriam!
Can thy bright faith e'er comfort grief like mine?

THE END.

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